

Resolution

Subject: Provincial Elders' Conference to Establish Licensed Ministry to Better Serve Southern Province Congregations and Fellowships
From: Vocation and Calling Committee

WHEREAS, God calls both ordained pastors and laity to serve the Church, granting gifts for ministry to both (Section 1.104a, Church Order of the Unitas Fratrum); and

WHEREAS, The Southern Province of the Moravian Church has a history of lay members who have assisted ordained pastors in service as acolytes in local congregations (Chapter 13.4, page 84, Book of Order); and

WHEREAS, Proposal #42 to the Synod of 2018 was referred to the Provincial Elders' Conference to "seek alternative methods of preparing people for existing and emerging ministries within the Moravian Church," to "work in partnership with Moravian Theological Seminary and consult with our full communion partners to develop clarity for lay orders of ministry in the MCSP," and to "explore development of ministry training for laity ministry," and to report to the 2022 Synod; and

WHEREAS, The Book of Order, Church Life in the Southern Province, Ch. 13 provides limits to service for both congregational and Provincial acolytes: 3. Reception of Acolytes #691. The Renewed Moravian Church has taken from the Ancient Church the title of "Acolyte" which was one of the seven steps of ordination and has transformed this into a call of discipleship in the congregation and Church. Such a call is extended to any brother or sister who carries a particular responsibility in the congregation or Province who, upon acceptance of the call, is then received as an Acolyte. This takes place in the presence of the assembled congregation by the Right Hand of Fellowship, given by the presiding pastor. An Acolyte's selection should be made by the local congregation's board or boards and approved by the Provincial Board, and his/her reception authorized by the Provincial Board. The Provincial Board has the right to authorize the reception of Acolytes for denominational service. He/she should be a person who exemplifies the teachings of Christ and who is respected by fellow members of the Church. The duties may include assisting the pastor in pastoral duties, special supervision for specific areas of service within the local congregations, assisting in serving the elements in Holy Communion when an ordained minister is present to consecrate the elements and preside at the Sacrament. Provincial Boards shall have the authority to appoint a qualified person as an Acolyte to serve as pastor of a specific congregation. Such appointments shall be for a period of one year. These can be renewed. When an ordained person is not available for the administration of the Sacraments, the Provincial Board may, after special instruction regarding the meaning and observance of the Sacraments, authorize

such a person to administer the Sacraments in the congregation for the period of time in which he/she has been appointed; and

WHEREAS, The provisions cited offer temporary service which must be renewed and are only an option where a pastor is present or in the case of a Provincial Acolyte for one year with additional accommodations for administration of the Sacraments; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Province has congregations that have diminished in size and can no longer afford the salary and benefits of an ordained minister; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Province has larger congregations that need more than one pastor to provide spiritual and nurturing care for their congregants but there may not be ordained ministers or funds available to call two or more ordained ministers; and

WHEREAS, congregations and fellowships have at times been served by Acolytes who have grown up in other faith traditions and lack experience in Moravian theology and polity; and

WHEREAS, there is potential liability for individuals, congregations and the Province should un-trained or under-trained lay leaders provide counseling in congregations where there is no ordained pastor with appropriate training or qualifications (e.g., Clinical Pastoral Education); and

WHEREAS, our Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian ecumenical partners have established lay ministry programs; and

WHEREAS, The Northern Province of the Moravian Church in North America has approved Licensed Ministry, which offers lay leaders gifted by God for service to prepare to use those gifts without pursuing ordained ministry; and

WHEREAS, Moravian Seminary offers the Crossroads Lay Leadership Program designed specifically for individuals who have a distinct sense of God's call and who are searching for ways to put that call into action, offering courses that enable participants to specialize and enhance their specific ministry skills, and serves as the training program for Licensed Ministers; and

WHEREAS, The Crossroads Lay Leadership Program has been an integral part of the process to successfully prepare Licensed Ministers in the Northern Province; and

WHEREAS, the Southern and Northern Provinces have long established reciprocity for ordained pastors, which could include Licensed Pastors; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Provincial Elders' Conference define within the next quadrennial period a new order of licensed pastor, perhaps replacing Provincial acolytes to serve the Southern Province after completing coursework deemed necessary, and for the PEC to report its progress to the Synod of 2026 with any changes required in the Book of Order to implement this resolution; and be it

RESOLVED, that the PEC consult with the current provincial acolytes throughout this study; and be it

RESOLVED, that provincial acolytes now serving the Southern Province be affirmed for their service, authorized to continue their ministry, and provided with opportunities for continuing their education.